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ARGUMENT

Claim 27 is rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite in that it fails to point out what is included by the claim language. Claim 27 has been amended to overcome this rejection by cancelling the limitation the Examiner cites as a basis for the rejection. The rejection is therefore moot and should be withdrawn.

Claims 27-31, 33, 36-40, 42, 45, 47, and 48 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Laor (US Pat. 6,076,069) and further in view of Gabber et al. (US Pat. 5,961,593)(hereinafter Gabber). These claims will be appealed.

Claims 32, 35, 41, and 44 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Laor and Gabber, further in view of Barnett, et al. (US 6,321,208)(hereinafter Barnett). These claims will be appealed.

Claims 34 and 43 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Laor and Gabber, further in view of Eggleston, et al. (US 6,061,660)(hereinafter Eggleston). These claims will be appealed.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Claims 27-48 are all in condition for allowance. If the Examiner has any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at (503) 264-8074. Early issuance of Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: _____

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Copy of claims as amended in this response:

27. (twice amended) An electronic commerce system comprising:

a club manager web site to create a club, the club manager web site including a registration component to register users as club members, and a credential creation component to create a value token associating a selected club member with entitlement to a benefit and to cryptographically sign the value token to create a credential;

at least one affiliate web site communicating with the club manager web site to receive the credential directly from the club manager web site, the at least one affiliate web site including a credential verification component to verify the authenticity of the value token of the credential, and a benefit provision component to provide the benefit to the selected club member on demand if the value token is valid; and

at least one club member communicating with the club manager web site to register for the club and to request the benefit, and communicating with the at least one affiliate web site to receive the benefit from the at least one affiliate web site, without further interaction between the at least one club member and the club manager[, and without using a cookie stored by the at least one club member].

28. The system of claim 27, wherein the club member is anonymous from the perspective of the club manager and the at least one affiliate.

29. The system of claim 27, wherein the club member comprises a user's personal computer and web browser.

30. The system of claim 27, wherein the value token comprises a randomly selected transaction identifier associating the club member with the benefit, but not identifying any characteristics of the club member.

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31. A method of securely passing a value token representing entitlement to a benefit between web sites in an electronic commerce system comprising:

- registering a user as a member of a club by a club manager web site;
- authenticating the club member and offering the benefit to the club member in a link to an affiliated web site;
- generating a value token associating the club member with entitlement to the benefit due to membership in the club;
- cryptographically signing the value token;
- communicating the signed value token from the club manager web site directly to the affiliated web site without storing the signed value token by the club member;
- verifying, by the affiliated web site, that the signed value token is valid;
- providing the benefit to the club member by the affiliated web site when the signed value token is valid without further interaction between the club member and the club manager web site.

32. The method of claim 31, further comprising registering the signed value token as used by the affiliated web site, thereby preventing the club member from subsequently obtaining the benefit.

33. The method of claim 31, wherein the club manager web site and the affiliated web site are operated by different entities.

34. The method of claim 31, further comprising billing the club member web site, by the affiliated web site, for the benefit delivered to the club member.

35. The method of claim 31, further comprising verifying, by the affiliated web site, that the value token has not been previously used by any club member.

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36. The method of claim 31, wherein the value token comprises a randomly selected transaction identifier associating the club member with the benefit, but not identifying any characteristics of the club member.

37. The method of claim 31, wherein the value token is unique for a combination of the club member, the affiliated web site, and the benefit.

38. The method of claim 31, wherein communicating the signed value token from the club manager web site to the affiliated web site comprises passing the signed value token as part of a form post to the affiliated web site.

39. The method of claim 31, wherein communicating the signed value token from the club manager web site to the affiliated web site comprises passing the signed value token in a dynamic hyper text markup language (DHTML) link by using a web browser of the club member.

40. An article comprising: a machine accessible medium having a plurality of machine accessible instructions, wherein when the instructions are executed by at least one processor, the instructions securely pass a value token representing entitlement to a benefit between web sites in an electronic commerce system by

- registering a user as a member of a club by a club manager web site;
- authenticating the club member and offering the benefit to the club member in a link to an affiliated web site;
- generating a value token associating the club member with entitlement to the benefit due to membership in the club;
- cryptographically signing the value token;
- communicating the signed value token from the club manager web site directly to the affiliated web site without storing the signed value token by the club member;
- verifying, by the affiliated web site, that the signed value token is valid;

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providing the benefit to the club member by the affiliated web site when the signed value token is valid without further interaction between the club member and the club manager web site.

41. The article of claim 40, further comprising instructions for registering the signed value token as used by the affiliated web site, thereby preventing the club member from subsequently obtaining the benefit.

42. The article of claim 40, wherein the club manager web site and the affiliated web site are operated by different entities.

43. The article of claim 40, further comprising instructions for billing the club member web site, by the affiliated web site, for the benefit delivered to the club member.

44. The article of claim 40, further comprising instructions for verifying, by the affiliated web site, that the value token has not been previously used by any club member.

45. The article of claim 40, wherein the value token comprises a randomly selected transaction identifier associating the club member with the benefit, but not identifying any characteristics of the club member.

46. The article of claim 40, wherein the value token is unique for a combination of the club member, the affiliated web site, and the benefit.

47. The article of claim 40, wherein instructions for communicating the signed value token from the club manager web site to the affiliated web site comprises instructions for passing the signed value token as part of a form post to the affiliated web site.

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48. The article of claim 40, wherein instructions for communicating the signed value token from the club manager web site to the affiliated web site comprises instructions for passing the signed value token in a dynamic hyper text markup language (DHTML) link by using a web browser of the club member.